

REPORT

Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth

Newton-Conover/Catawba County/Hickory City Schools

Prepared for:

**Council on Adolescents of Catawba
County
Hickory, NC**

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Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
I.	Introduction.....	1
	• Developmental Assets: A Paradigm of Positive Human Development.....	1
	• How Your Study Was Done.....	2
	• How to Use This Report.....	3
II.	Portrait of Developmental Assets.....	8
	• External Assets.....	8
	• Internal Assets.....	9
	• Deficits.....	9
	• Figure Descriptions.....	9
III.	Portrait of Risk-Taking Behaviors and Thriving Indicators.....	18
	• Figure Descriptions.....	18
IV.	The Power of Developmental Assets.....	24
	• Figure Descriptions.....	24
V.	From Awareness to Action.....	32
	• The Challenge.....	32
	• Promoting Developmental Assets.....	33
	• Taking Action.....	34
Appendices		
A.	A list of all survey items with response option percentages by total sample, by gender, and by grade.....	A - 1
B.	Item mapping to assets, deficits, risk-taking behaviors, high-risk behavior patterns, and thriving indicators.....	B - 1
C.	A bibliography of the theory and research undergirding Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets.....	C - 1
D.	Search Institute asset-promoting print and video resources.....	D - 1

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Search Institute will treat this report as confidential. Because the data upon which this report is based can be used to advance the understanding of adolescent development, Search Institute reserves the right to add these data to its larger Developmental Assets database. This report is based on data from *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, copyright © 1996 by Search Institute. For additional information, contact Search Institute's Data Services Department, 1-800-888-7828.

I. Introduction

Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets provides a way to assess the health and well-being of middle and high school age youth. The assets represent a common core of developmental building blocks crucial for all youth, regardless of community size, region of the country, gender, family economics, or race/ethnicity. This report summarizes the extent to which youth in your community experience these assets and how the assets relate to their behavior. These 40 Developmental Assets were assessed using the survey *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*.

Developmental Assets: A Paradigm of Positive Human Development

A litany of studies—both national and local—call attention to frighteningly high rates of alcohol and other drug use, teenage pregnancy, violence, school failure, and other concerns about adolescents. People everywhere are looking for solutions to these problems. Yet, in spite of our best intentions, we seem to be making little progress. The most common response is to seek to reduce problems through prevention programs, early intervention, and social services. Then, when all else fails, we turn to increasingly expensive treatment and/or incarceration, adding more strain to community resources and patience.

It is appropriate to try to control and reduce problems among young people. Indeed, health-compromising, future-jeopardizing, and safety-threatening behaviors must be confronted and solutions sought. And forces that threaten healthy development—such as adults who exploit youth, over-exposure to mass media, violence, poverty, and racism—must be vigorously combated. However, the problem-centered approach which relies heavily on professionals and public sector resources rarely works by itself. Despite the best intentions and valiant efforts of concerned and competent people and organizations, the problems often persist or are replaced by other problems that require still more resources.

A complementary approach is needed—one that accents healthy development and requires action by all residents of a community. This approach recognizes that a major issue in all towns and cities is that many of the core processes of healthy development are increasingly absent. These include adult support, positive intergenerational relationships, safe places, clear and consistent boundaries, participation in constructive activities, commitment to learning, consistent attention to values, and practice in serving others. The fragility of this developmental infrastructure explains many of the behavioral choices made by adolescents that trouble communities.

Strengthening, and in some cases rebuilding, this developmental infrastructure is essential for the positive development of all young people in all communities. Furthermore, everyone has a role to play. Though support from professionals and the public sector is needed, much of the responsibility and capacity for the healthy development of youth is in the hands of the people who interact with young

people every day—families, friends, neighbors, seniors, law enforcement, businesses, religious institutions, and other citizens.

Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets provides a way not only for assessing your youth but also for mobilizing community-wide attention to the need for the healthy development of young people.

The 40 assets and their definitions are listed in Figure 1. The assets are grouped into two major types:

1. **External assets** are positive developmental experiences that surround youth with support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and opportunities for constructive use of time. When provided by many different formal and informal systems in a community, they stimulate and nurture positive development in youth.

2. **Internal assets** are a young person's own commitments, values, and competencies. They are grouped into categories of educational commitment, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Similar to the external assets, community is also important for the development of these internal assets.

The asset framework is based on years of scientific inquiry into risk and resiliency factors, as well as normal developmental processes. Researchers and evaluators at Search Institute have combined and analyzed numerous studies to create the asset framework. This research has shown that youth with higher levels of assets are significantly less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as substance use, delinquency, school truancy, or too-early sexual activity. In addition, they are more likely to exhibit indicators of thriving, such as school success and informal helping.

For more information about Search Institute's work undergirding the Developmental Asset paradigm, see Appendix C.

How Your Study Was Done

The survey *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* was used to measure these assets among youth in your community. Similar research has been conducted with hundreds of thousands of young people in hundreds of communities across the country.¹

The survey was administered in April, May, and June, 2007 to a random sample of classrooms in grades 8, 10, and 12 at Newton-Conover Middle School, Newton-Conover High School, Arndt Middle School, Riverbend Middle School, Jacobs Fork Middle School, Maiden Middle School, Mill Creek Middle School, St. Stephens High School, Bandys High School, Bunker Hill High School, Maiden High School, and Fred T. Foard High School in Newton and Northview Middle School, Grandview Middle School, Hickory High School, and Early College High School in Hickory, NC. Standardized

¹Early studies measured a set of 30 developmental assets. The new framework of 40 assets reflects Search Institute's ongoing commitment to increase the understanding of the developmental needs and processes of children and adolescents.

administration procedures were provided to school staff by Search Institute to enhance the quality of the data. To ensure complete student anonymity, no names or identification numbers were used.

Parents were notified of survey administration and given the option of withdrawing their student(s).

To create the final set of data on which these findings are based, several checks were made on individual survey responses. For this report, 51 survey(s) were eliminated due to inconsistent responses, missing data on 40 or more items, reports of unrealistically high levels of alcohol or other drug use (e.g., daily use of multiple drugs), or grades other than those intended to be surveyed. The number of surveys discarded represents 5 percent of the total number of surveys received at Search Institute. Typically between five and eight percent of surveys are discarded for these reasons. If, for any reason, the percentage of discarded surveys is greater than 10 percent, caution should be used in interpreting the results, as some bias may be present.

Another factor affecting the quality of the data is the degree to which the surveyed students represent the youth in the participating school(s). If a random sample was used, the sample needs to be large enough to appropriately represent the student population. Studies intended to assess all youth should ideally obtain data from at least 80 percent of the students. Neither method produces perfect results, but both can provide quality information about your youth.

In this report, percentages are generally reported by total group, by gender, and by grade. To protect anonymity, if data are available from fewer than 30 students per grade, percentages are reported for combinations of grades (for example 6th-7th-8th, 9th-10th, and 11th-12th). When the sample sizes at the individual grade levels are 50 youth or fewer, caution should be used in making comparisons among grades, unless the sample sizes represent the total number of youth in those grades. If all grades 6-12 were not surveyed, caution should be used in reporting the total percentages as they will not necessarily be representative of the entire population of students in grades 6-12. Characteristics of the youth participating in your study are given in Figure 2.

How to Use This Report

This report contains important insights about the young people in your community. It includes information about the challenges they face and the internal strengths and external supports they have to overcome those challenges.

In reading a report such as this, there is often a tendency to debate the accuracy of individual numbers or their meanings. Some general guidelines for interpretation may be helpful. First, differences of five percent or more between grade levels or between males and females are worthy of thought and consideration. Second, it is often helpful to look for *patterns* of findings rather than to focus on a specific asset or finding, for example, does one grade or set of grades consistently report fewer assets? Third, do not overwhelm others with numbers at the risk of losing their understanding of key messages. Rather, make more use of the figures that give the overall messages such as the average number of assets your youth report.

There are many people in your community who will benefit from the information in this report. These include educators, parents, young people, youth workers, community leaders, policy makers, media, religious leaders, employers, coaches, health care providers, and so on. Use local resources or those from Search Institute to help you communicate these findings to others. Appendix D in this report lists some of the asset-building resources available from Search Institute.

Once you have shared the information with key people and groups, your community can begin the important work of asset building. This, of course, requires a long-term, community-wide effort. While this report gives a snapshot of youth at a particular point in time, asset building begins at birth and continues through childhood, adolescence, and beyond. Section V of this report highlights some ideas for getting started as an asset-building community. Once you do, you will find that there are many individuals and groups in your own community that already are involved in asset building. You also will find that many people and organizations have creative new ways to build assets. Asset building is not a program—it is a catalyst for connecting and empowering all sectors of your community.

Figure 1: 40 Developmental Assets

External Assets

Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition
Support	1. Family support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	2. Positive family communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
	3. Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
	4. Caring neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.
	5. Caring school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
	6. Parent involvement in schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	7. Community values youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
	8. Youth as resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community.
	9. Service to others	Young person serves in the community one or more hours per week.
	10. Safety	Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries and Expectations	11. Family boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
	12. School boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.
	13. Neighborhood boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
	14. Adult role models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
	15. Positive peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
	16. High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
Constructive Use of Time	17. Creative activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
	18. Youth programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
	19. Religious community	Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
	20. Time at home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Figure 1: 40 Developmental Assets (Cont'd)

Internal Assets		
Asset Type	Asset Name	Definition
Commitment to Learning	21. Achievement motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.
	22. School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.
	23. Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
	24. Bonding to school	Young person cares about her or his school.
	25. Reading for pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
Positive Values	26. Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.
	27. Equality and social justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
	28. Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
	29. Honesty	Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
	30. Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
	31. Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
Social Competencies	32. Planning and decision making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
	33. Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
	34. Cultural competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
	35. Resistance skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
	36. Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
Positive Identity	37. Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
	38. Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
	39. Sense of purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
	40. Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Figure 2: Who Was Surveyed

		Number of Youth	Percent of Total
Total Sample		942	100
Gender*			
	Male	493	53
	Female	442	47
Grade*			
	6	0	0
	7	0	0
	8	361	38
	9	0	0
	10	322	34
	11	0	0
	12	258	27
Race / Ethnicity*			
	American Indian	9	1
	Asian / Pacific Islander	78	8
	Black / African American	104	11
	Hispanic	75	8
	White	628	67
	Multi-racial	46	5

*Numbers may not sum to "Total Sample" due to missing information.

II. Portrait of Developmental Assets

In this section information about your young people's assets is presented in various forms. Both the average number of assets your youth report plus the percentage of youth who report each asset are noted. Whether or not a youth is said to have an asset is based on how he or she answered the questions that measure the asset. (See Appendix B for more information on which survey items measure each asset. See Appendix A for information on how your youth responded to each survey item.) In order to simplify reporting and focus attention on overall trends, all assets are assessed as either present or absent in a youth's life. In reality, of course, youth experience assets in degrees, not all or nothing.

Figure 3 shows the average number of assets for all youth combined, as well as by grade. In order to motivate and challenge your community, you may want to create a shared vision for the average number of assets you want your youth to experience. This approach reminds citizens that there are many different asset combinations that contribute to the healthy development of youth. When a majority of youth experience an asset, it becomes accepted and normative.

External Assets

Figures 4 and 5 show the overall percentages of youth who report each *external* asset as well as the percentages by grade and gender. The external assets are the positive experiences and support a young person receives from formal and informal connections to others in the community. There are 20 external assets, divided into four categories: **support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time.**

The **SUPPORT** assets refer to the way young people experience love, affirmation, and acceptance. Ideally, young people experience an abundance of support not only in their families but also from many other people in the community.

The **EMPOWERMENT** assets relate to the key developmental need for youth to be valued and valuable. The empowerment assets highlight this need, focusing on community perceptions of youth (as reported by youth), and opportunities for youth to contribute to society in meaningful ways.

BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS assets refer to the need for youth to have clear and enforced boundaries to complement support and empowerment. Ideally, boundary assets are experienced in the settings of family, school, and neighborhood, providing a set of consistent messages about appropriate and acceptable behavior across socializing systems.

The final category of external assets is **CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME**. One of the prime characteristics of a healthy community for youth is a rich array of structured opportunities for children and adolescents. Whether through schools, community organizations, or religious institutions, these structured activities contribute to the development of many of the internal and external assets.

Internal Assets

Figures 6 and 7 show the overall percentage of youth with each *internal* asset and the percentage by grade and gender. The internal assets are those things a community and family nurture within youth so they can contribute to their own development. There are 20 internal assets divided into four categories: **commitment to learning**, **positive values**, **social competencies**, and **a positive identity**.

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING is essential to young people in today's changing world. Developing an internal intellectual curiosity and the skills to gain new knowledge and learn from experience are important characteristics for a workforce that must adapt to rapid change.

POSITIVE VALUES are important "internal compasses" to guide young people's priorities and choices. Though there are many values that we seek to nurture, the asset framework focuses on six values known to both help prevent high risk behaviors *and* promote caring for others.

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES reflect the important personal skills young people need to negotiate through the maze of choices and options they face. These skills also lay a foundation for independence and competence as young adults.

POSITIVE IDENTITY assets focus on young people's view of themselves—their own sense of power, purpose, worth, and promise. Without these assets, young people risk feeling powerless and without a sense of initiative and purpose.

Deficits

Assets form part of the developmental infrastructure on which healthy lives are built. Deficits are countervailing influences that can interfere with a youth's healthy development, limiting access to external assets, blocking development of internal assets, or easing the way into risky behavioral choices. Deficits are negative influences, none of which necessarily does permanent harm, but each of which makes harm more possible.

Figure Descriptions

Figure 3: The average number of 40 assets your youth report, for the total sample and by grade level. Each student's responses are analyzed to determine whether he/she has each asset. The number of assets are then averaged across groups (total sample and grade level). Past evidence indicates that the number of reported assets is relatively similar across grades. Attention should be focused on increasing the number of assets your youth report.

Questions to consider: What is the average number of assets reported by your youth? How do the number of assets compare across grades? Are there any grades reporting low numbers of assets?

Figure 4: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 20 external assets, listed under four general external asset categories. This bar graph gives a visual presentation of the differences in percentages in the external assets.

Questions to consider: Where are the strengths and needs of your youth with respect to external assets; that is, which assets do more of your youth report, and which do fewer report? Are there some *categories* of assets that are particularly high or low in general?

Figure 5: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 20 external assets, for the total sample, by gender, and by grade. The 20 external assets are listed under the four general external asset categories. You will notice that the percentages for the total sample correspond to those presented graphically in Figure 4.

Questions to consider: Are there differences between males and females? Do females report certain external assets more than males, and vice versa? Are there certain grades reporting consistently higher or lower levels of external assets?

Figure 6: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 20 internal assets, listed under the four general internal asset categories. This bar graph gives a visual presentation of the differences in percentages in the internal assets.

Questions to consider: Where are the strengths and needs of your youth with respect to internal assets; that is, which assets do more youth report, and which do fewer report? Are there some *categories* of assets that are particularly high or low in general?

Figure 7: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 20 internal assets, for the total sample, by gender, and by grade. The 20 internal assets are listed under the four general internal asset categories. You will notice that the percentages for the total sample correspond to those presented graphically in Figure 6.

Questions to consider: Are there differences between males and females? Do females report certain internal assets more than males, and vice versa? Are there certain grades reporting consistently higher or lower levels of internal assets?

Figure 8: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of five developmental deficits, for the total sample, by gender, and by grade. Each of these deficits can interfere with the development of assets. Each also is correlated with high-risk behavior. Although this report advocates community-based efforts to promote Developmental Assets, communities must also focus attention on preventing these and related deficits (e.g., poverty, racism, exclusion).

Questions to consider: What percentage of your youth are reporting these deficits? Are there differences between males and females, or across grade levels? How do these differences in deficits relate to the differences in the assets you have already detected?

Figure 3: Average Number of 40 Assets

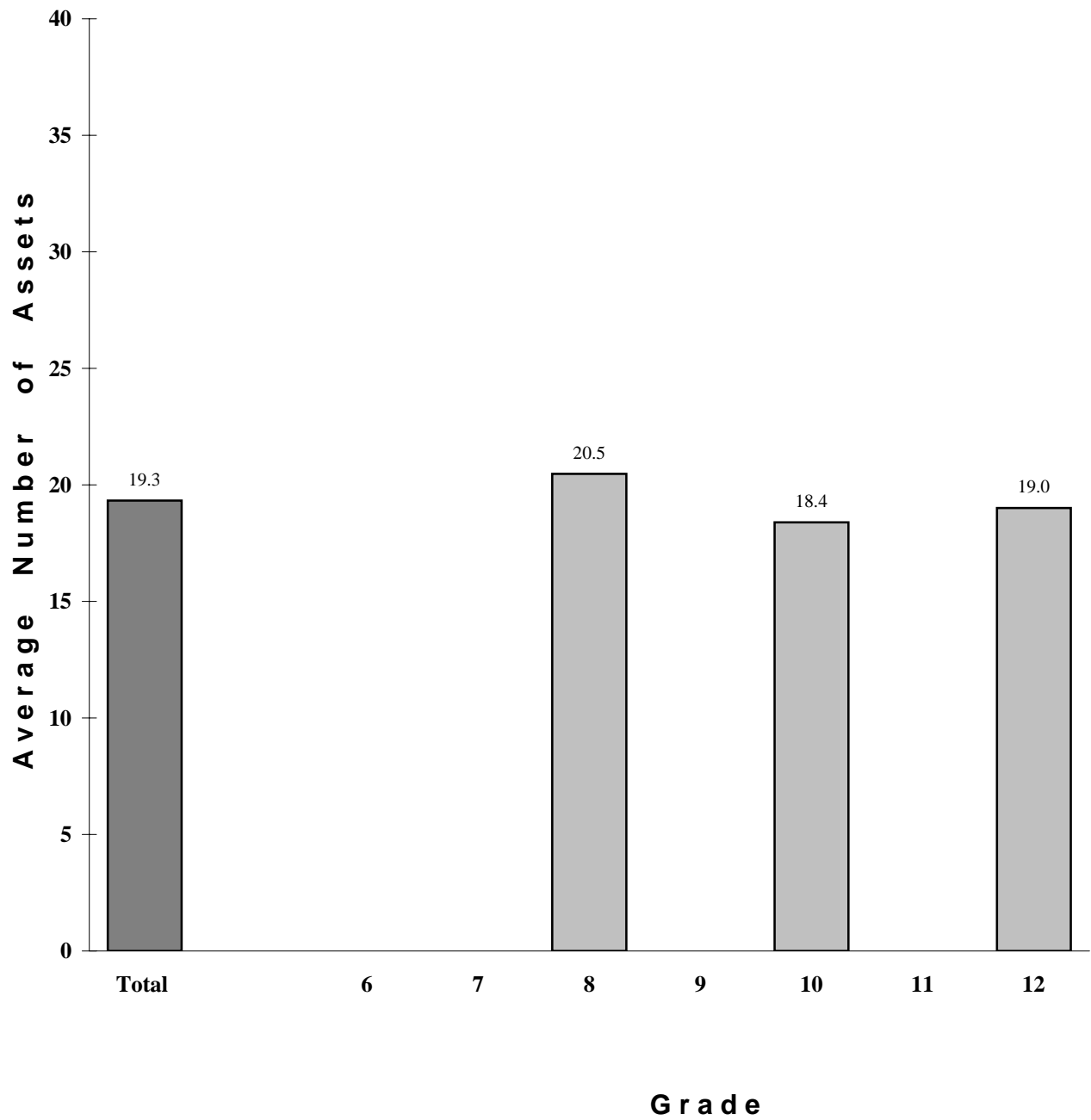


Figure 4: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 20 External Assets

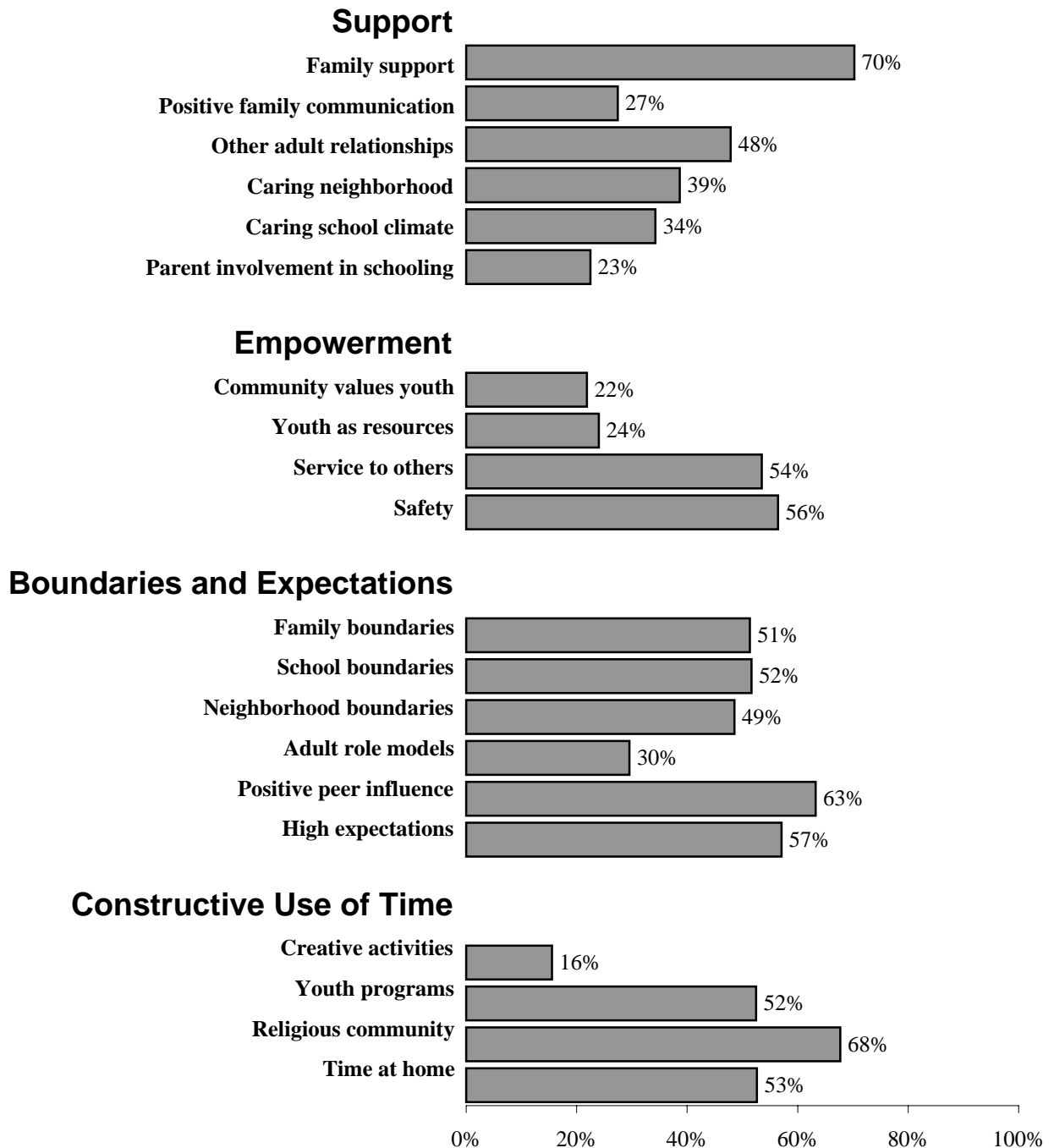
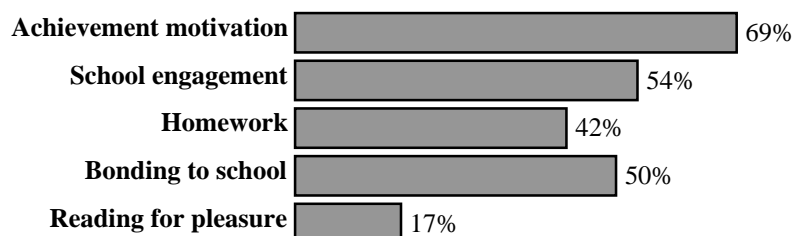


Figure 5: Percent of Youth Reporting Each External Asset, by Gender and Grade

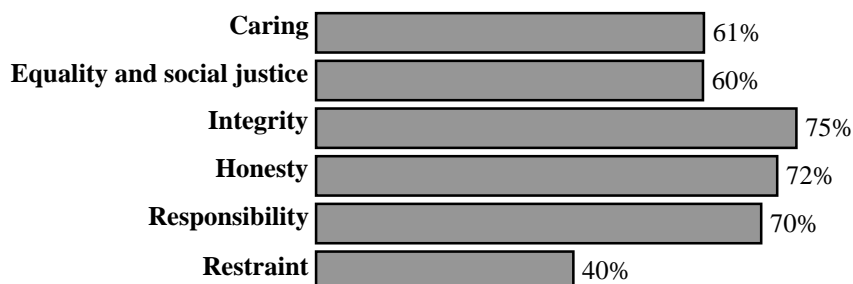
External Asset	Total	Gender		Grade							
	Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Support											
1. Family support	70	72	69			72		68		70	
2. Positive family communication	27	26	29			32		27		21	
3. Other adult relationships	48	49	47			45		49		51	
4. Caring neighborhood	39	41	37			45		36		33	
5. Caring school climate	34	33	36			40		28		34	
6. Parent involvement in schooling	23	23	22			30		21		14	
Empowerment											
7. Community values youth	22	22	22			26		19		21	
8. Youth as resources	24	27	21			27		23		21	
9. Service to others	54	53	55			53		55		52	
10. Safety	56	71	40			52		53		67	
Boundaries and Expectations											
11. Family boundaries	51	51	52			57		48		49	
12. School boundaries	52	49	54			60		48		44	
13. Neighborhood boundaries	49	49	48			57		45		42	
14. Adult role models	30	29	30			30		26		33	
15. Positive peer influence	63	63	64			74		59		55	
16. High expectations	57	56	58			71		50		46	
Constructive Use of Time											
17. Creative activities	16	14	17			18		16		11	
18. Youth programs	52	56	48			52		57		47	
19. Religious community	68	69	66			74		62		66	
20. Time at home	53	49	56			63		51		40	

Figure 6: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 20 Internal Assets

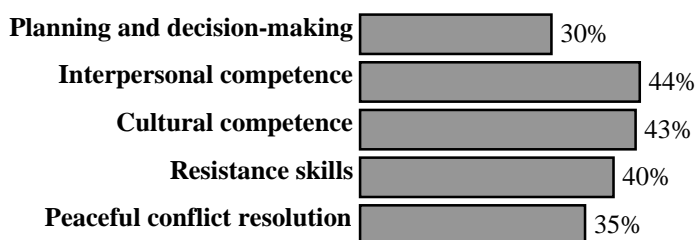
Commitment to Learning



Positive Values



Social Competencies



Positive Identity

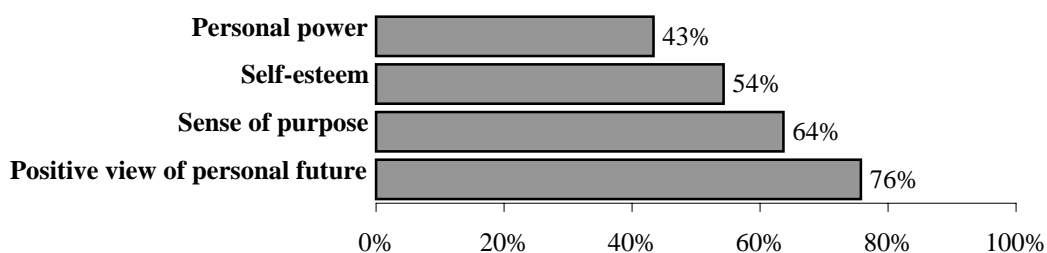


Figure 7: Percent of Youth Reporting Each Internal Asset, by Gender and Grade

Internal Asset	Total	Gender		Grade							
	Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Commitment to Learning											
21. Achievement motivation	69	62	76			73		67		66	
22. School engagement	54	45	63			51		57		52	
23. Homework	42	37	48			45		43		37	
24. Bonding to school	50	50	50			56		47		46	
25. Reading for pleasure	17	12	22			17		17		15	
Positive Values											
26. Caring	61	53	69			62		54		67	
27. Equality and social justice	60	51	71			62		56		64	
28. Integrity	75	70	80			71		73		83	
29. Honesty	72	68	77			71		66		80	
30. Responsibility	70	65	74			68		66		77	
31. Restraint	40	33	49			62		30		23	
Social Competencies											
32. Planning and decision-making	30	28	32			31		26		33	
33. Interpersonal competence	44	29	60			44		40		48	
34. Cultural competence	43	39	48			48		37		43	
35. Resistance skills	40	34	46			43		34		42	
36. Peaceful conflict resolution	35	28	42			40		32		33	
Positive Identity											
37. Personal power	43	45	42			38		41		53	
38. Self-esteem	54	60	48			53		54		57	
39. Sense of purpose	64	69	58			63		61		68	
40. Positive view of personal future	76	75	77			76		73		79	

Figure 8: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 5 Deficits, by Gender and Grade

Deficit	Definition	Total	Gender		Grade						
		Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Alone at Home	Two hours or more per school day	49	45	52			40		50		58
TV Overexposure	Watches TV or videos three or more hours per school day	33	32	33			33		31		34
Physical Abuse	Reports one or more incidents, "have you ever been physically harmed (that is, where someone caused you to have a scar, black and blue marks, welts, bleeding, or a broken bone) by someone in your family or someone living with you?"	30	30	31			31		31		29
Victim of Violence	Reports one or more incidents, "how many times in the last 2 years have you been the victim of physical violence where someone caused you physical pain or injury?"	28	33	23			30		28		26
Drinking Parties	Reports attending one or more parties in the last year "where other kids your age were drinking."	51	55	47			31		56		74

III: Portrait of Risk-Taking Behaviors and Thriving Indicators

There is growing concern in the United States about the increase in negative and potentially life-threatening behaviors among our young people as well as a decrease in positive, health-promoting behaviors. This section presents information about your youth's involvement in each of 24 risk-taking behaviors. Also measured is the extent to which your youth report each of eight thriving indicators, which are commonly valued and accepted as important elements of healthy development.

Perhaps more important than your youth's involvement in individual acts of risk-taking are *patterns of high-risk behavior*—repeated involvement in behaviors that compromise a young person's well-being. For example, a young person who reports using alcohol once or more in the past month is considered to be involved in risk-taking behavior. However, a young person who has used alcohol *three* or more times in the past month (almost once a week) is engaging in a high-risk pattern of behavior and is even more likely to experience negative consequences related to the behavior.

Figure Descriptions

Figure 9: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of nine risk-taking behaviors related specifically to alcohol, tobacco, and/or other drug use. The figure presents the risk-taking behaviors and how these behaviors are defined within the survey. Percentages are also reported for each behavior by gender and by grade.

Questions to consider: What percentage of your youth are reporting these substance-related risk-taking behaviors? Are there differences between males and females, or across grade levels? How do these differences relate to the differences in the assets or the deficits you have already detected?

Figure 10: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 15 other risk-taking behaviors, such as anti-social behavior and gambling. The figure presents the risk-taking behaviors and how these behaviors are defined within the survey. Percentages are also reported for each behavior by gender and by grade.

Questions to consider: What percentages of your youth are reporting these risk-taking behaviors? Are there differences between males and females, or across grade levels? How do these differences relate to the differences in the assets or the deficits you have already detected?

Figure 11: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting problematic levels of 10 high-risk behavior patterns. The figure presents the high-risk behavior patterns and how these patterns are defined within the survey. Essentially, the high-risk behavior patterns represent higher incidence levels

of the previously reported 24 risk behaviors; and, in many cases, combinations of related risk behaviors are used to define a pattern. Percentages are also reported for each pattern by gender and by grade.

Questions to consider: What percentage of your youth are reporting these high-risk behavior patterns? Are there differences between males and females, or across grade levels? How do these differences relate to the differences in the assets or the deficits you have already detected?

Figure 12: The percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of eight thriving indicators, ranging from affirmation of diversity to school success. The figure presents the thriving indicators and how they are defined within the survey. Percentages are also reported for each thriving indicator by gender and by grade.

Questions to consider: What percentage of your youth report these thriving indicators? Are there differences between males and females, or across grade levels? How do these differences in thriving relate to the differences in the assets, deficits, or risk-taking behaviors that you have already detected?

Figure 9: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 9 Substance Use Related Risk-Taking Behaviors, by Gender and Grade

Risk-Taking Behavior		Total	Gender		Grade						
Category	Definition	Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Alcohol	Used alcohol once or more in the last 30 days	34	38	28			17		39		50
	Got drunk once or more in the last two weeks	23	26	19			12		27		33
Tobacco	Smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days	17	20	13			8		17		29
	Used smokeless tobacco once or more in the last 12 months	9	15	2			4		11		14
Inhalants	Sniffed or inhaled substances to get high once or more in the last 12 months	9	8	10			12		10		3
Marijuana	Used marijuana once or more in the last 12 months	20	24	16			11		22		31
Other Drug Use	Used other illicit drugs once or more in the last 12 months*	10	10	10			7		12		11
Driving and Alcohol	Drove after drinking once or more in the last 12 months	13	15	10			4		11		28
	Rode (once or more in the last 12 months) with a driver who had been drinking	34	32	35			31		33		37

* Includes cocaine, LSD, PCP or angel dust, heroin, and amphetamines

Figure 10: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 15 Other Risk-Taking Behaviors, by Gender and Grade

Risk-Taking Behavior		Total	Gender		Grade						
Category	Definition	Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Sexual Intercourse	Has had sexual intercourse one or more times	41	45	36			17		45		68
Anti-Social Behavior	Shoplifted once or more in the last 12 months	23	26	20			20		29		21
	Committed vandalism once or more in the last 12 months	21	28	13			20		23		17
	Got into trouble with police once or more in the last 12 months	23	32	14			18		27		25
Violence	Hit someone once or more in the last 12 months	38	48	27			41		40		32
	Physically hurt someone once or more in the last 12 months	19	27	9			17		21		18
	Used a weapon to get something from a person once or more in the last 12 months	5	7	3			5		5		5
	Been in a group fight once or more in the last 12 months	21	27	15			21		25		18
	Carried a weapon for protection once or more in the last 12 months	21	30	11			19		24		19
	Threatened physical harm to someone once or more in the last 12 months	35	42	27			32		38		35
School Truancy	Skipped school once or more in the last four weeks	25	28	22			19		25		34
Gambling	Gambled once or more in the last 12 months	35	48	20			26		36		46
Eating Disorder	Has engaged in bulimic or anorexic behavior	15	13	17			11		19		16
Depression	Felt sad or depressed most or all of the time in the last month	16	11	22			17		15		16
Attempted Suicide	Has attempted suicide one or more times	14	10	17			11		15		15

Figure 11: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 10 High-Risk Behavior Patterns, by Gender and Grade

High-Risk Behavior Pattern		Total	Gender		Grade						
Category	Definition	Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Alcohol	Has used alcohol three or more times in the last 30 days or got drunk once or more in the last two weeks	25	29	21			13		30		35
Tobacco	Smokes one or more cigarettes every day or uses chewing tobacco frequently	11	14	7			3		11		22
Illicit Drugs	Used illicit drugs three or more times in the last 12 months*	16	20	12			8		19		24
Sexual Intercourse	Has had sexual intercourse three or more times in lifetime	30	32	28			5		34		59
Depression/Suicide	Is frequently depressed and/or has attempted suicide	24	17	31			21		25		25
Anti-Social Behavior	Has been involved in three or more incidents of shoplifting, trouble with police, or vandalism in the last 12 months	20	28	12			16		24		22
Violence	Has engaged in three or more acts of fighting, hitting, injuring a person, carrying or using a weapon, or threatening physical harm in the last 12 months	35	45	25			35		38		31
School Problems	Has skipped school two or more days in the last four weeks and/or has below a C average	20	24	17			17		22		23
Driving and Alcohol	Has driven after drinking or ridden with a drinking driver three or more times in the last 12 months	16	16	16			11		15		24
Gambling	Has gambled three or more times in the last 12 months	17	26	7			10		19		25

* Includes cocaine, LSD, PCP or angel dust, heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines

Figure 12: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 8 Thriving Indicators, by Gender and Grade

Thriving Indicator	Definition	Total	Gender		Grade						
		Sample	M	F	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Succeeds in School	Gets mostly As on report card	24	20	29			25		25		22
Helps Others	Helps friends or neighbors one or more hours per week	82	80	85			83		82		82
Values Diversity	Places high importance on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups	69	63	77			75		64		66
Maintains Good Health	Pays attention to healthy nutrition and exercise	56	57	54			59		54		52
Exhibits Leadership	Has been a leader of a group or organization in the last 12 months	73	75	71			73		74		72
Resists Danger	Avoids doing things that are dangerous	19	14	24			18		18		22
Delays Gratification	Saves money for something special rather than spending it all right away	45	48	41			44		41		50
Overcomes Adversity	Does not give up when things get difficult	74	78	69			73		72		77

IV: The Power of Developmental Assets

Fortunately, the choices young people make about how to act, what to do, and who to be are not made simply by chance. Their decisions are made based on a web of external and internal influences, including the Developmental Assets. The figures in this section reflect how the assets they experience influence the choices they make regarding the risk-taking behaviors and thriving indicators described in section III.

Search Institute's studies have consistently shown that young people who experience more of the assets engage in fewer risk-taking behaviors, and are more likely to report indicators of thriving. In other words, the more assets a young person experiences, the more likely he or she will choose a healthy lifestyle. This has been shown to be true regardless of age, race, gender, or region of the country. It is likely that the data about your youth will follow this same pattern.

Figure Descriptions

Figure 13: Average number of risk-taking behaviors by asset levels. This bar graph illustrates the powerful effect of assets on risk-taking behaviors among your youth. Your youth were first categorized by the total number of assets each reported (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40), and then the average number of the 24 risk-taking behaviors was calculated. Likely your data reflect a higher average number of risk-taking behaviors among those students with lower levels of assets.

Questions to consider: Do assets make a difference for your youth? Do your youth follow the normative pattern of decreasing levels of risk-taking behaviors with higher levels of assets?

Figure 14: The protective consequences of Developmental Assets—the percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of nine risk-taking behaviors related specifically to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. These findings are based on the total sample, reported by asset level. This figure, similar to Figure 9, presents the risk-taking behaviors and how these behaviors are defined within the survey. In addition, percentages are reported for each behavior by the four levels of assets (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40 assets). Typically there has been strong and consistent evidence that youth reporting more assets also report fewer risk-taking behaviors.

Questions to consider: What is the general pattern of risk-taking behaviors as you move across asset levels? Is the pattern consistent with what Search Institute has seen in its studies?

Figure 15: The protective consequences of Developmental Assets—the percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 15 risk-taking behaviors related to potentially harmful actions. The figure, similar to Figure 10, presents the risk-taking behaviors and how these behaviors are defined within the survey, together with the total sample percentage for each. In addition, percentages for each

behavior are reported by asset level (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31-40 assets). Typically there has been strong and consistent evidence that youth reporting more assets also report fewer of these risk-taking behaviors.

Questions to consider: What is the general pattern of risk-taking behaviors as you move across asset levels? Is the pattern consistent with what has been found in Search Institute's studies, or with what you would expect?

Figure 16: The protective consequences of Developmental Assets—the percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of 10 high-risk behavior patterns. The findings are reported for the total sample and by asset level. The figure, similar to Figure 11, presents the high-risk behaviors and how they are defined within the survey, together with the total sample percentage reporting each pattern. In addition, percentages are reported by asset level (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40 assets). Historically there has been strong and consistent evidence that youth reporting more assets also report fewer high-risk behaviors.

Questions to consider: What is the general pattern of high-risk behaviors as you move across asset levels? Is the pattern consistent with what has been found in Search Institute's studies or with what you would expect?

Figure 17: Average number of eight thriving indicators by asset level. Just as assets protect, they also promote. As this bar graph shows, youth with more assets generally report higher average levels on the eight thriving indicators.

Questions to consider: Do assets make a difference for your youth? Do your youth follow the normative pattern of increasing levels of thriving indicators with higher levels of assets?

Figure 18: The positive consequences of Developmental Assets—the percentage of your surveyed youth reporting each of eight thriving indicators. These findings are reported for the total sample and by asset level. The figure, similar to Figure 12, presents the thriving indicators and how they are defined within the survey, together with the overall percentage of the total sample reporting each. In addition, percentages are reported by asset level (0-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40 assets). Strong and consistent evidence indicates that youth who report more assets also report more thriving indicators.

Questions to consider: What is the pattern of thriving indicators as you move across asset levels? Is the pattern consistent with what has been found in Search Institute's studies or with what you would expect?

Figure 13: Average Number of 24 Risk-Taking Behaviors, by Asset Level

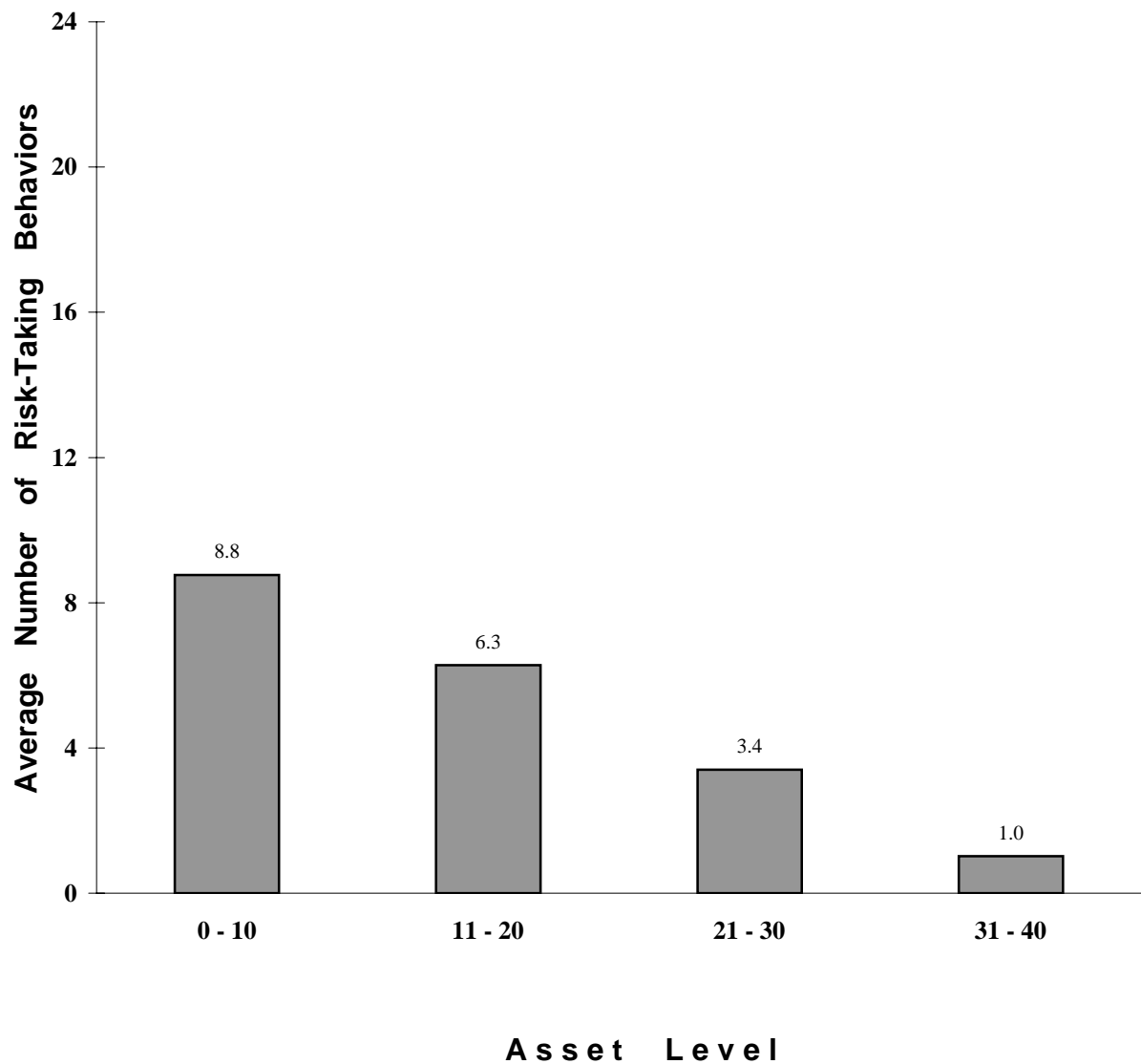


Figure 14: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 9 Substance Use Related Risk-Taking Behaviors, by Asset Level

Risk-Taking Behavior		Total	Number of Assets			
Category	Definition	Sample	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Alcohol	Used alcohol once or more in the last 30 days	34	50	41	26	7
	Got drunk once or more in the last two weeks	23	35	30	15	5
Tobacco	Smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days	17	34	22	11	0
	Used smokeless tobacco once or more in the last 12 months	9	14	11	5	4
Inhalants	Sniffed or inhaled substances to get high once or more in the last 12 months	9	20	11	4	2
Marijuana	Used marijuana once or more in the last 12 months	20	41	27	11	0
Other Drug Use	Used other illicit drugs once or more in the last 12 months†	10	27	14	2	0
Driving and Alcohol	Drove after drinking once or more in the last 12 months	13	20	17	9	0
	Rode (once or more in the last 12 months) with a driver who had been drinking	34	51	42	24	13

† Includes cocaine, LSD, PCP or angel dust, heroin, and amphetamines

Figure 15: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 15 Other Risk-Taking Behaviors, by Asset Level

Risk-Taking Behavior		Total	Number of Assets			
Category	Definition	Sample	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Sexual Intercourse	Has had sexual intercourse one or more times	41	62	48	33	7
Anti-Social Behavior	Shoplifted once or more in the last 12 months	23	45	27	15	0
	Committed vandalism once or more in the last 12 months	21	43	26	10	4
	Got into trouble with police once or more in the last 12 months	23	38	31	12	9
Violence	Hit someone once or more in the last 12 months	38	56	47	28	9
	Physically hurt someone once or more in the last 12 months	19	36	22	12	2
	Used a weapon to get something from a person once or more in the last 12 months	5	13	7	0	2
	Been in a group fight once or more in the last 12 months	21	40	28	12	5
	Carried a weapon for protection once or more in the last 12 months	21	35	25	13	5
	Threatened physical harm to someone once or more in the last 12 months	35	55	44	24	5
School Truancy	Skipped school once or more in the last four weeks	25	41	32	17	5
Gambling	Gambled once or more in the last 12 months	35	44	41	31	18
Eating Disorder	Has engaged in bulimic or anorexic behavior	15	17	18	12	2
Depression	Felt sad or depressed most or all of the time in the last month	16	36	17	10	0
Attempted Suicide	Has attempted suicide one or more times	14	31	14	9	2

Figure 16: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 10 High-Risk Behavior Patterns, by Asset Level

High-Risk Behavior Pattern		Total Sample	Number of Assets			
Category	Definition		0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Alcohol	Has used alcohol three or more times in the last 30 days or got drunk once or more in the last two weeks	25	38	32	17	5
Tobacco	Smokes one or more cigarettes every day or uses chewing tobacco frequently	11	23	14	6	2
Illicit Drugs	Used illicit drugs three or more times in the last 12 months†	16	35	24	6	0
Sexual Intercourse	Has had sexual intercourse three or more times in lifetime	30	47	35	25	5
Depression/ Suicide	Is frequently depressed and/or has attempted suicide	24	50	26	16	2
Anti-Social Behavior	Has been involved in three or more incidents of shoplifting, trouble with police, or vandalism in the last 12 months	20	43	27	8	2
Violence	Has engaged in three or more acts of fighting, hitting, injuring a person, carrying or using a weapon, or threatening physical harm in the last 12 months	35	59	42	24	5
School Problems	Has skipped school two or more days in the last four weeks and/or has below a C average	20	48	24	10	2
Driving and Alcohol	Has driven after drinking or ridden with a drinking driver three or more times in the last 12 months	16	29	20	10	2
Gambling	Has gambled three or more times in the last 12 months	17	26	21	12	9

† Includes cocaine, LSD, PCP or angel dust, heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines

Figure 17: Average Number of 8 Thriving Indicators, by Asset Level

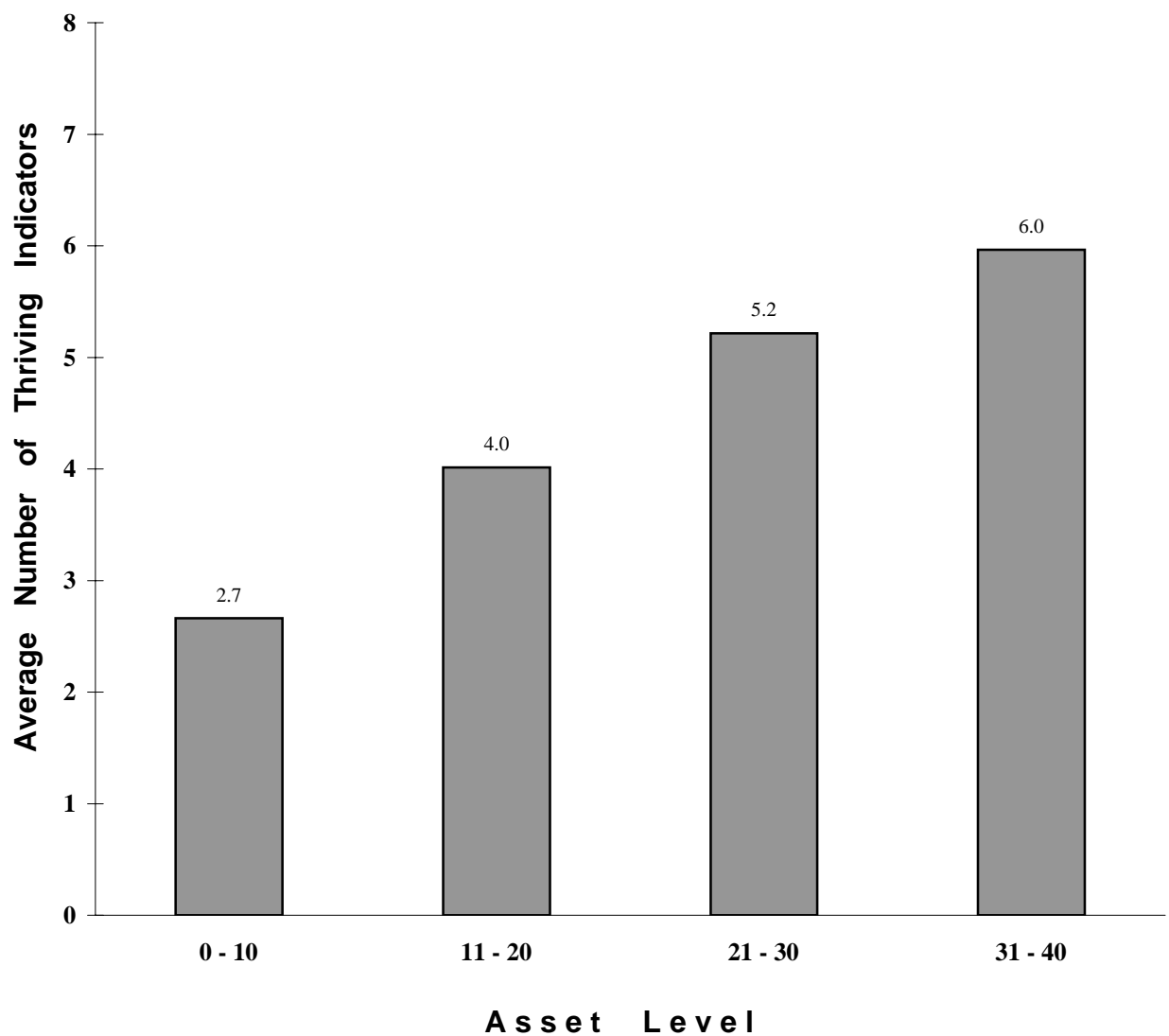


Figure 18: Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 8 Thriving Indicators, by Asset Level

Thriving Indicator	Definition	Total	Number of Assets			
		Sample	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Succeeds in School	Gets mostly As on report card	24	9	16	35	50
Helps Others	Helps friends or neighbors one or more hours per week	82	55	81	93	93
Values Diversity	Places high importance on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups	69	37	61	83	96
Maintains Good Health	Pays attention to healthy nutrition and exercise	56	25	47	69	89
Exhibits Leadership	Has been a leader of a group or organization in the last 12 months	73	48	71	84	88
Resists Danger	Avoids doing things that are dangerous	19	8	15	24	34
Delays Gratification	Saves money for something special rather than spending it all right away	45	28	41	53	61
Overcomes Adversity	Does not give up when things get difficult	74	55	71	82	86

V. From Awareness to Action

The Challenge

In all communities across the country, Developmental Assets are too fragile. Ideally, a community should strive to ensure that all youth experience 31 or more of the 40 Developmental Assets. In your community, 7 percent of students surveyed report 31 or more of the assets (see Figure 19). Had your study included youth who have dropped out of school, the picture of assets would likely be even more somber.

This portrait of Developmental Assets likely mirrors the pattern found in communities across the nation. Regardless of town size or geography, youth typically:

- receive too little support through sustained and positive intergenerational relationships;
- lack opportunities for leadership and involvement;
- disengage from youth-serving programs in the community;
- experience inconsistent or unarticulated boundaries;
- feel disconnected from their community; and
- miss the formation of social competencies and positive values.

As long as this pattern continues, we will see too many young people who are susceptible to risk taking and negative pressure, drawn to less desirable sources of belonging, and ill-equipped to become the next generation of parents, workers, leaders, and citizens. Why are we in this situation? A number of social forces could be at work, including:

- high levels of parental absence in the lives of children;
- adult silence about boundaries and values;
- the fragmentation of many socializing systems;
- age segregation and the general disengagement of the public from building meaningful connections with youth;
- the isolation of people of all ages within neighborhoods;
- over-exposure to the mass media;
- barriers to healthy development such as poverty, lack of access to programs and services, and families ill-equipped to care for their children;
- fear of involvement by adults and a sense that youth are the responsibility of "someone else"; and
- the too-common occurrence of schools, religious institutions, and other youth-serving organizations not adequately equipped to be places of support, caring, and positive challenge.

This combination of factors suggests, among other things, that we are losing our capacity to be communities in which caring, connectedness, and a shared sense of purpose are common-place and a commitment to children dominates public and private life.

Promoting Developmental Assets

Assets are cumulative or additive—the more, the better. Search Institute's research has consistently shown that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to be involved in risk-taking behaviors. And, multiple forms of thriving, such as school success, increase as assets increase. Given the power of the Developmental Assets and their current state of disrepair, a commitment to asset building should become a top priority. While many well-intentioned youth development efforts focus on the consequences of asset depletion, unless we place major energy into rebuilding the asset foundation for youth, the problems we now see will persist—and likely increase.

How do we begin the work of strengthening the Developmental Assets for all young people? Through its work with communities across the country, Search Institute has identified six principles to help guide the process.²

1. ***All young people need assets:*** While it is crucial to pay special attention to those who have the least (economically or emotionally), **all** children and adolescents will benefit from having more assets than they now have.
2. ***Everyone can build assets:*** Asset development requires positive messages across a community. All adults, youth, and children play a role.
3. ***It's an ongoing process:*** Asset development starts when a child is born and continues through high school and beyond.
4. ***Relationships are key:*** A central key to asset development is strong relationships between adults and young people, young people and their peers, and teenagers and children.
5. ***Consistent messages:*** Asset building requires consistent, positive messages about what is important.
6. ***Redundancy:*** Young people need to hear the same positive messages and feel support over and over again, from many different people.

Asset-building communities mobilize people, organizations, institutions, and systems to take action around a shared understanding of positive development. Figure 20 lists 35 characteristics of asset-building communities. Ultimately, rebuilding and strengthening the developmental infrastructure in a community is not a program run by professionals. It is a movement that creates a community-wide sense of common purpose, places residents and their leaders on the same team moving in the same direction, and creates a culture in which all residents are expected, by virtue of their membership in the community, to promote the positive development of youth.

² Adapted from *Uniting Communities for Youth: Mobilizing All Sectors to Create a Positive Future* by Dr. Peter L. Benson, Search Institute, 1995.

Taking Action

There is no single model for how a community-wide, asset-building initiative is launched and sustained. However, certain dynamics appear essential. The movement requires a team of people—representing all socializing systems and voices in the community (including youth)—to gather information, plan, and take the lead in mobilizing the community’s asset-building capacity. We recommend these general strategies for getting started:

- **Establish long-term goals and perspective**—Use the information in this report to begin developing a shared community-wide vision of increasing the asset base for all children and adolescents. Strive to increase the average number of assets to 31 or more. Reaching this target cannot be rushed or done with a single new idea or program. It will take a long-term commitment, multiple and coordinated changes, and a passion for the vision that will sustain the efforts.
- **Mobilize the public**—A priority should be communicating the Developmental Assets and their power to all residents of your community—including children and youth—on multiple occasions, using a variety of media.
- **Think intergenerationally**—In all communities, we have become too comfortable with disconnected generations. Opportunities to connect old and young, adults and youth, teenagers and children should be acknowledged and celebrated for their asset-building power.
- **Expand the reach of family education**—Families are a key source of Developmental Assets. All parents and guardians need multiple opportunities to learn about, remember, and build Developmental Assets. Agencies, schools, community education, religious institutions, the media, public health, and other community-based organizations should work together to provide these opportunities, with particular emphasis on promoting responsible fathering.
- **Support and expand current asset-building efforts**—Though they may not use the same vocabulary, many people, places, and programs already build assets. They are found throughout communities in neighborhoods, schools, parks and recreation programs, religious institutions, and youth organizations. Recognizing, publicizing, and supporting these efforts, helps to reinforce their commitment and inspires others to take similar action.
- **Strengthen socializing systems**—Though much asset-building occurs in daily, informal interactions, neighborhoods, schools, religious institutions, youth organizations, and employers must also become more intentional about asset building. Opportunities for training, technical assistance, and networking should be made available in these settings.
- **Empower youth to contribute**—Many youth feel devalued by adults. And most report that their community does not provide useful roles for young people. It should become normative in all settings where youth are involved to seek their input and advice, to make decisions with them, and to treat them as responsible, competent allies in all asset-building efforts.

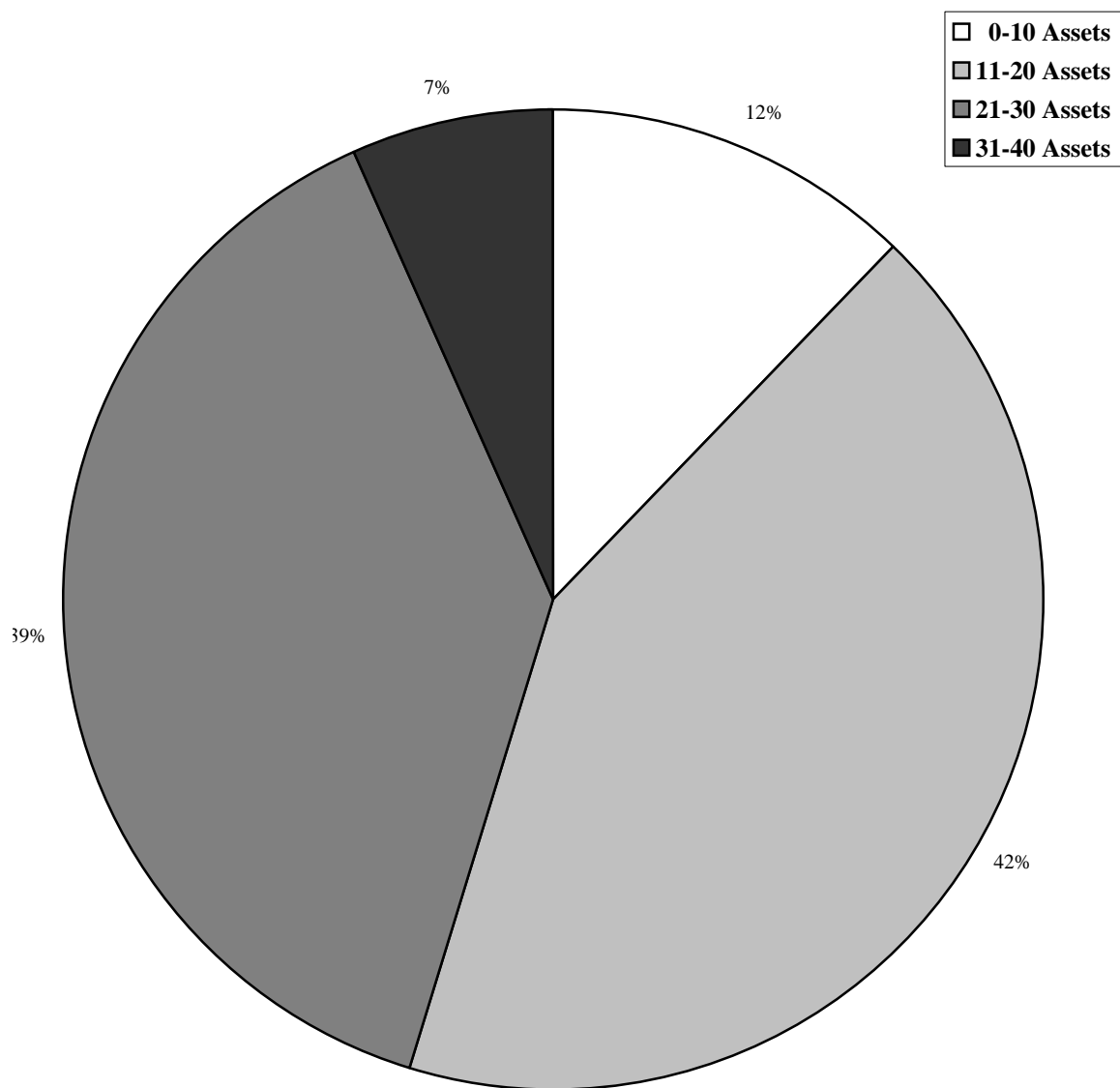
- **Elevate the importance of service**—It ought to become the norm for children and youth to engage in acts of caring and compassion for others and for the common good through youth organizations, families, neighborhoods, schools, and religious institutions. Service to others both solidifies caring values and provides opportunities for building the assets of social competencies, empowerment, and positive identity. When combined with intentional reflection, it becomes a powerful tool for shaping learning, positive values, and competencies. A goal is to ensure that all youth engage in acts of service many times a year from ages 5-20.

- **Provide places to grow**—Too many youth are disengaged from the kinds of teams, clubs, organizations, and programs that provide safe and active places to develop asset strength. All citizens and their leaders need to rally around the expansion of opportunities, and parents and all adults must encourage and reward involvement.

- **Advocate for quality opportunities for young people**—Young people are the responsibility not just of families but of the whole community. It is the responsibility of all citizens—whether they have children or not—to demand, support, and allocate necessary resources for the highest quality schools, pre- and after-school care, and other youth programs. In addition, individuals should be challenged to contribute their time and talent as volunteers in youth programs. Employers should be encouraged to provide incentives for volunteer activity on behalf of children and youth.

- **Begin public dialogue**—It is a formidable task to build public consensus on a common core of shared values and boundaries. Nevertheless, a way must be found to pursue this essential dialogue. While cultural, religious, and political diversity adds richness to these discussions, there is also a shared set of values and boundaries—unknown at this point to all of us—which every community and its people can articulate and uphold. Beginning this process in neighborhoods and apartment buildings, in congregations and community centers, and in other grassroots settings not only leads to broader understanding in the community as a whole, but it also begins to create relationships and connections at the personal level.

Figure 19: The Challenge



Note. Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 20: 35 Characteristics of Asset-Building Communities

1. A vision rooted in Developmental Assets is communicated several times a year to all residents.
2. All residents understand their personal capacity to promote Developmental Assets.
3. Most residents take personal responsibility.
4. Most residents take action.
5. New residents are quickly socialized to the community vision.
6. Children and teenagers know the Developmental Assets.
7. Most youth take action to promote assets for themselves and for their peers.
8. The community thinks and acts intergenerationally. Most adults establish sustained relationships with children and adolescents and most adolescents establish sustained relationships with younger children.
9. Youth have many opportunities to lead, make decisions, and give input; youth are provided useful roles in community life. Youth then are actors in the reclaiming of community rather than just objects of programs.
10. All children and teenagers frequently engage in service to others. Much of this "work" is done with adults, and a premium is placed on learning from these experiences (i.e., service-learning).
11. A common core of values is named.
12. Adults model and articulate their values.
13. A common core of boundaries is named.
14. Adults model and articulate these boundaries.
15. Families are supported, taught, and equipped to elevate asset building to top priority.
16. Community programs assist adults – particularly parents – to personally reclaim Developmental Assets.
17. Neighbors and community residents build caring relationships with youth and express this caring through dialogue, listening, commending positive behavior, acknowledging their presence, enjoying their company, and involving them in decision-making. They know neighborhood children and adolescents by name and take time to get to know them.
18. Businesses that employ teenagers address the assets of support, boundaries, values, and social competencies. Employers also develop family-friendly policies and provide mechanisms for employees to build relationships with youth.
19. Religious institutions mobilize their capacity for intergenerational relationships, educating and supporting parents, constructive use of time, values development, and service to the community. They focus on both their own members and the larger community.
20. Schools – both elementary and secondary – place priority on becoming caring environments for all students, providing a challenging and engaging curriculum for all students, providing opportunities for nurturing values deemed crucial by the community, expanding and strengthening co-curricular activities, and using their connections with parents to reinforce the importance of family attention to assets.

Figure 20: 35 Characteristics of Asset-Building Communities (Cont'd)

21. Youth organizations and other service providers train leaders and volunteers in asset-building strategies and provide meaningful opportunities for youth to serve their communities and build citizenship and leadership skills.
22. Local government – through policy, influence, training, and resource allocation – moves asset development and community-wide cooperation to top priorities for planning, policies, and funding allocations within the municipality.
23. The community invests in expanding and strengthening its systems of youth clubs, teams, and organizations
24. Virtually all 7- to 18-year-olds are involved in one or more clubs, teams, or other youth-serving organizations that view building assets as central to their mission.
25. All professionals (e.g., day-care providers, teachers, social workers, religious youth workers) and volunteers (e.g., coaches, mentors) who work with youth receive training in asset building.
26. The media (print, radio, television, internet) repeatedly communicate the community's vision, support local mobilization efforts, and provide forums for sharing innovative actions taken by individuals and organizations.
27. The community prizes cultural strengths and traditions. Particularly for youth of color, this heritage includes the concept of elders, the primacy of intergenerational relationships, respect for figures of authority, the value of caring for others, and a wisdom about what matters. Being in touch with and affirming these strengths represent an important dimension of cultural competence, in addition to knowledge and contact with cultures beyond one's own.
28. Teenagers have safe places "to hang."
29. Families have safe places on weekends and during evenings to receive short-term child care.
30. All children receive frequent expressions of support in both informal public settings and in places where youth gather.
31. The community celebrates the individuals and systems which take innovative action. Youth professionals and volunteers have high status in the life of the community.
32. The community-wide commitment to asset building is long-term and inclusive.
33. The community pays particular attention to helping girls develop assertiveness skills, a sense of personal control and mastery, and healthy self-concept.
34. The community pays particular attention to helping boys develop and express compassion and caring.
35. Current programs which intentionally build assets, such as peer helping, mentoring, and service-learning, are elevated to top priority and expanded to reach a larger number of youth.